

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEHRAN 07325 170742Z

13

ACTION NEA-12

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4177

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 7325

E.O. 11652: GEE

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IR

SUBJECT: INCREASINGLY PRO-ARAB IRANIAN SENTIMENTS
IN MIDDLE EAST WAR

REF: (A) TEHRAN 7126; (B) TEHRAN 7181

1. IRANIAN MEWSPAPERS, RADIO AND TELEVISION HAVE BEEN DOMINATED OVER PAST SEVERAL DPS BY REPORTS AND COMMENTARIES ON LATEST ARAB-ISRAEL WAR. IN ACCORDANCE WITH OFFICIAL IRANIAN SUPPORT FOR ARAB TERRITORIAL CLAIMS AGAINST ISRAEL, ALL MEDIA HAVE CONTINUED TO SUPPORT THE ARAB CAUSE. A NEW AND NOTEWORTHY DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT DAYS AS ARABS HAVE DEMONSTRATED GREATER FIGHTING ABILITY IS REAL GROWTH OF SYMPATHY FOR ARAB CAUSE AMONG ALL SEGMENTS OF IRANIAN POPULATION.

2. SAMPLES OF SENTIMENT WE HAVE HEARD ARE:

(A) RESPECTED PROFESSOR AT NATIONAL UNIVERSITY REPORTS 100 PERCENT PRO-ARAB FEELING AMONG STUDENT BODY WITH SIMILAR SENTIMENTS RELIABLY REPORTED AT TEHRAN UNIVERSITY;

(B) HEAD OF GHAZVIN COLLEGE REPORTS SAME REACTION
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 07325 170742Z

AT HIS SCHOOL;

(C) SEVERAL PRO-WESTERN JOURNALISTS REPORT SURGE
OF SYMPATHY FOR ARABS;

(D) VERY STRONG PRO-ARAB
FEELINGS REPORTED AMONG
POORER CLASSES IN SOUTH TEHRAN (NOT SURPRISINGLY); AND

(E) SEVERAL MULLAHS HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO ADVOCATE
IRANIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION ON SIDE OF ARABS.

3. IRAN HAS LONG ENJOYED MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL DE FACTO
RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. CONVENTIONAL WISDOM IS THAT THE
UPPER CRUST FAVORS THE ISRAELI CONNECTION WHILE THE LOWER
CLASSES FROWN ON IT OUT OF CONSIDERATIONS OF ISLAMIC
SOLIDARITY. BUT WITH THE ARABS FIGHTING BETTER THIS TIME,
SYMPATHY FOR ARABS SEEMS DEFINITELY TO BE GROWING EVEN IN
UPPER RANKS OF IRANIAN SOCIETY. CERTAINLY REACTIONS AMONG
THE STUDENTS AT IRANIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND TEHRAN

UNIVERSITY REPRESENTING A VERY HIGH LEVEL OF WEALTH AND SOCIAL
POSITION, SUPPORT THIS VIEW. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS THAT EMBASSY
OFFICERS HAVE HAD WITH IRANIAN AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS IN TEHRAN,
REASONS BEHIND THIS SHIFTING SENTIMENT ARE:

(A) IRANIAN OPPORTUNISM WHICH QUICKLY IDENTIFIES
WITH A WINNER;

(B) PRIDE IN THEIR FELLOW MUSLIMS NOW THAT THE
ARABS ARE PROVING THEMSELVES IN BATTLE;

(C) ARABS ARE JUSTIFIED IN FIGHTING TO RECOVER
LOST LANDS;

(D) ISRAELIS HAVE BOMBED CIVILIAN TARGETS; AND

(E) AS SHAH HAS SUPPORTED ISRAEL IN PAST, PRO-
ARAB EXPRESSIONS ARE A SAFE WAY TO CRITICIZE THE SHAH.
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